

P 121126Z SEP 01  
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5933  
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
OPM-SANG RIYADH SA  
CHUSMTM RIYADH SA  
JTF SWA

UNCLAS RIYADH 002627

E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: TFUS01: SAUDI REACTION TO SEPTEMBER 11  
TERRORIST ATTACKS

REF: RIYADH 2620

OFFICIAL SAG REACTION  
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¶1. ON THE EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 11, THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT (UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION):

THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA EXPRESSES ITS CONDEMNATION OF THE REGRETTABLE AND INHUMAN EXPLOSIONS AND ATTACKS WHICH OCCURRED AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK AND THE PENTAGON IN WASHINGTON IN THE U.S.A. THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA STRONGLY CONDEMNS ACTS SUCH AS THESE WHICH ARE IN CONFLICT WITH ALL RELIGIOUS VALUES AND SOCIAL AND HUMAN UNDERSTANDING. THE KINGDOM OFFERS ITS SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS, TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, AND TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THE KINGDOM REITERATES ITS CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM AND WILL CONTINUE TO ACT ALONG WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO COMBAT TERRORISM IN ALL OF ITS FORMS.

¶2. SAUDI MEDIA COVERAGE WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL, BUT THE STORY DOMINATES WITH A SOMBER EDITORIAL TONE EXPRESSING SHOCK, GLOOM, SADNESS AND DEPRESSION.

PUBLIC REACTION  
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¶3. MOVING ABOUT RIYADH ON THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 11, POLOFF OBSERVED A BEEFED-UP SAG SECURITY PRESENCE, PARTICULARLY AROUND THE DIPLOMATIC QUARTER. LOCAL STORES WERE BUSY, THOUGH FEW WESTERN EXPATS WERE SHOPPING. POLOFF HAD SEVERAL CHANCE ENCOUNTERS WITH SAUDIS AND NON-WESTERN EXPATS, ALL OF WHOM EXPRESSED CONDOLENCES AND OFFERED SYMPATHY. AN ENCOUNTER OUTSIDE OF A LARGE SHOPPING MALL WAS REPRESENTATIVE. A GROUP OF FOUR THIRTY-ISH SAUDI MALES EXPRESSED CONDOLENCES, THEN ONE COMMENTED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS, ESPECIALLY REGARDING WHAT HE FELT WOULD BE AN INEVITABLE BACKLASH AGAINST ARABS AND MUSLIMS. ANOTHER SAID THAT THIS TYPE OF ACTION WAS UNCALLED FOR IN ANY SITUATION AND ASSERTED THAT "TRUE MUSLIMS" WOULD NOT HESITATE IN CONDEMNING THE ACTION. STILL, THEY SAID, THE ONGOING INTIFADA IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES HAD CREATED A GREAT DEAL OF RANCOR TOWARDS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT. THEY IMPLIED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED A RESPONSE TO THE GROWING TENSION GIVEN ALL THE WARNINGS SENT FROM THE ARAB WORLD ABOUT THE DETERIORATING SITUATION. WHILE IN NO WAY JUSTIFYING THE ATTACKS OR SHOWING ANY SATISFACTION, THE MESSAGE WAS CLEAR: "WE TOLD YOU SO."

¶4. SHORTLY AFTER NEWS OF THE ATTACKS WAS BROADCAST ON LOCAL MEDIA, AN AMCIT EXECUTIVE AT A LARGE SAUDI COMPANY REPORTED THAT HIS SAUDI COLLEAGUES AND SUBORDINATES REACTED WITH MIXED EMOTIONS: SOME EXPRESSED SHOCK AND SYMPATHY, OTHERS REACTED WITH GRATIFICATION THAT "AMERICA IS FEELING PAIN," WHILE STILL OTHERS VOICED CONCERN THAT THE INCIDENTS MIGHT SOMEHOW INTERFERE WITH THE U.S. VISA ISSUANCE PROCESS

AND THEIR FUTURE TRAVEL TO THE U.S.

15. ANOTHER CONTACT WHO HAS BEEN CLOSELY MONITORING PAN-ARAB SATELLITE VERNACULAR NEWS COVERAGE AND ARABIC-LANGUAGE INTERNET MESSAGE BOARDS STATED THAT SAUDIS AND OTHER ARABS ARE GINNING UP NUMEROUS CONSPIRACY THEORIES WHICH ATTRIBUTE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACKS TO VIRTUALLY EVERYONE EXCEPT ARABS (MOSSAD AGENTS, MILOSEVIC-SUPPORTING YUGOSLAVS, AND UNDERLINGS OF A RECENTLY-EXTRADITED COLOMBIAN DRUG LORD ARE THE PRIME SUSPECTS). A NUMBER OF APPARENTLY INACCURATE REPORTS (E.G. EXPLOSION AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, DELIBERATE USG SHOOT-DOWN OF AIRLINER NEAR PITTSBURGH, ATTACK ON CAMP DAVID) REMAIN IN CIRCULATION. FEARS OF AN ANTI-ARAB/ANTI-MUSLIM BACKLASH IN THE U.S. APPEAR WIDESPREAD.

16. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE RECEIVED NUMEROUS CALLS AND E-MAIL MESSAGES FROM SAUDI, WESTERN, AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES EXPRESSING SHOCK AND HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES.

SCOBAY